



Hear Ye,

HEAR ME

Ever wonder why they say “live and in person?” Those are two attributes that people long for when they go out to a performance. First, “live,” means you’re present and engaged and that you can see, hear and relate to everything that’s going on around you. Second, “in person” means that you’re prepared and willing to share your thoughts, feelings and imagination openly with your audience.

Why talk?

If the main focus of your performance is on the music, why talk? When your show begins, the audience members have arrived from many different places. Some have been out dining and chatting about their day, some might have hired a baby-sitter and rushed through traffic to get to your show, others may be out-of-towners who ended up at your show by chance. One reason to talk to an audience is to begin to shut out the outside world and bring everyone’s attention to the present moment, and to you, the main attraction.

Unless you’re a well-known entertainer you’re a stranger to the audience. Conversation about yourself and the members of your band lets the audience see something about you that they wouldn’t know if they were listening to your CD. Ever notice how many people say “I went to see the band,” and not “I went to hear the band?” Or how many concerts are named “An evening with...?” Concert performances are an opportunity for the audience to hang out with you. And for you to hang out with them.

And in the center ring...

Talk can direct the audience's attention to where you want it to be. If the next tune is featuring your percussionist playing an exotic gourd, tell the audience from whence came this exotic gourd, or where in the world they play it, or how you first heard it, or on and on. Everyone's attention will be focused on the percussionist before you begin the tune.

Your music may need some introduction. If you're doing original material, or music that comes from other cultures, or old music with a new "take," the audience will be more engaged if they know what they're listening to. Many theatrical performances have extensive program notes. Your patter is the program notes for your concert.

Talk can buy you time when the guitarist needs to tune, the trumpet player dropped all his music off the stand, you need to catch your breath, you want to change moods or your set is going too fast.

Right this way..

Talking with the audience is a great way to take everyone on a journey and set a mood. We all love to hear the words "Once upon a time..."

You are completely under my power

Would you like to sell your CD's? Do you want people to sign your mailing list? Do you want to announce where you will be playing next? Do you want to direct attention to your merchandising table? All of these things are easy to do with just a few well chosen words to the audience.

When you're programming your set, decide where you'll want to talk and do some thinking about what you will say in advance. Write yourself some brief notes about what you want to talk about. If, when you're on the stage, inspiration hits, you can always fill in. If you're dumbstruck for some reason, thinking about what you want to say before hand will save your sanity when your mind goes suddenly blank. Some forethought can save you the embarrassment of blurting out something you wish you didn't, or the dreaded "uh, uh," or "this is one of my favorite songs." So?